



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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Along with a host of primary candidate choices, the August third ballots include two important questions that would each alter our state's constitution if approved by a majority of voting Missourians.

Folks in and around the southwest Missouri community of Rockaway Beach successfully petitioned to get "Amendment 1" on the ballot. Rockaway Beach is on the shores of Lake Taneycomo, which, following the building of a dam several decades ago, is really a wide ribbon of the White River. Once a thriving resort area, plunging water temperatures (an odd result caused by the mechanics of the dam itself) began repelling vacationers from Rockaway Beach while the rising popularity of nearby Branson attracted them.

Currently, the constitution only allows gambling boats on the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. In an effort to revive their community, Rockaway Beach is asking voters to amend the constitution to allow construction of a riverboat casino on, or very near, the White River. Support for the expansion runs strong in the community if a very strong straw poll and even stronger marketing campaign are any indicators. Opposition comes largely from Bransonites concerned with gambling's perceived contradiction with family values and, much less vocalized, the strong competition for tourist dollars that a boat presents.

Missouri's gaming and gambling industry has another facet to consider: school funding. Riverboats and lottery tickets are heavily taxed, with the net tax revenues all going to schools. The Rockaway amendment even adds specificity to what programs the tax revenue from that proposed riverboat would go toward. Gaming and gambling give schools a considerable funding boost, though one ponders whether playing games of chance should play any part in the education equation at all.

Voting "yes" on Amendment 1 allows the campaign to expand riverboat gambling locations to continue. (Several subsequent hurdles would remain, including lobbying the Missouri Gaming Commission to grant another riverboat license.) Voting "no" stops the project.

Personally uncomfortable with gambling and the socio-economic changes often set in motion by the boats, I believe the citizens of Rockaway Beach fully understand the potential benefits and consequences it is now up to the rest of the state to voice their opinion of this matter.

A nearly-unanimous Missouri House and Senate membership bring to the ballot “Amendment 2,” which would constitutionally define a legally recognized marriage in Missouri as that between a man and a woman. The definition mirrors language in a state statute enacted in the 1990s.

Proponents strongly believe in maintaining America’s historic recognition of traditional marriage and assert that placing the man-and-woman definition in the constitution prevents the prospect of liberal-leaning courts declaring the existing statute “un-constitutional,” as has occurred in Massachusetts. Opposition comes in the form of one, some or all of the following: no Missouri court would rule out the existing statute, the statute makes the amendment needless, the amendment is a ban of gay marriage.

Voting “yes” on Amendment 2 elevates Missouri’s legal definition of marriage from statutory to constitutional status. Voting “no” does not. I believe our state’s view of legally recognizable marriage is not a ban but instead the very definition of a definition. Bans have no place in a constitution; definitions most certainly do.

I hope that this review of the constitutional amendments for the August Primary has been helpful. However you should vote, it is just important that you participate in the electoral process and cast your vote.

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## Amendment Questions One and Two

...as they will appear on the August 3 primary ballots

### **Amendment 1 - Riverboat Gambling Expansion**

“Shall the Missouri Constitution be amended to authorize floating gambling facilities on or adjacent to the White River in Rockaway Beach, Missouri, to be licensed and regulated consistent with all other floating facilities in the State of Missouri, with fifty percent of the state revenues generated in the current year to be used for uniform salary supplement grants to all high quality teachers employed in priority schools, and the remaining state revenues generated in the current year to be distributed to all priority school districts on a per pupil basis for capital improvements to education facilities?”

This constitutional amendment will generate annual direct gaming revenue ranging from \$39.9 to \$49.0 million for the state and \$10.2 to \$12.4 million for the local government, subject to local voter approval and licensing by the State Gaming Commission. The amount of indirect revenue or expense, if any, is unknown.”

### **Amendment 2 – Constitutional Definition of Legally Recognized Marriage**

“Shall the Missouri Constitution be amended so that to be valid and recognized in this state, a marriage shall exist only between a man and a woman?”

The estimated fiscal impact of this proposed measure to state and local governments is \$0.”